MMR_0276 W Robert Stobbe

Bob Stolle and fellow Division 3 members are working together to complete the construction on Bob's Oakdale Southern model Railroad.

Pictured Above in March 1974 Bulletin

I am pleased to announce W. Robert Strobbe, of Kerrville, TX, and the Lone Star Region has earned Master Model Railroader No. 276.

Robert has earned Certificates of Achievement as a Master Builder – Motive Power, Cars, Structures and Scenery, a Model Railroad Engineer – Civil and Electrical, and a Model Railroad Author.

Congratultions Robert.

--Pete Moffett, MMR, AP Chair

PLEASE READ BELOW PAGE FOR EXPANDED BIO DONE LATER

Modeler started scratchbuilding at 4

Robert Stobbe earns MMR #276

Robert Stobbe, MMR #276 was born and grew up just a few yards from the Memphis Branch of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. Thus the love of trains and especially the steam locomotive is in his blood. His first train had a wind-up cast iron locomotive and lithographed tinplate cars. By the time he was about 4, he found the circular track was most unrealistic and so asked his father to straighten the tin-plate track which he took out into the back yard and put sand on it for ballast. Bob considers this was the moment that he became a model railroader.

When he was older, he used to ride his bicycle to several service stations where he would collect empty 5-quart oil cans. When opened and flattened these made excellent sources of sheet metal with which to work. Bob didn't khow to solder so he built his O scale cars with the tab and slot method used in making tin plate toys in those days. Bob traded for another boy's American Flyer caboose which he took apart and flattened with a hammer to use as a pattern for making cabooses. He even made a die to stamp out rails from his oil can metal.

Making wheels presented a really big challenge. He tried casting them with lead, but he could not accurately center the axle holes. Model railroading was unheard of in the small West Tennessee town where he grew up. Bob knew that anyone who found out about his hobby would think he was nuts, so he pretty much kept this a secret.

Near the end of WWII Bob returned from Europe on a hospital ship and ended up in an army hospital in New Mexico. It was here that Bob saw his first copy of Model Railroader. He says he was overjoyed to learn that his hobby was actually legitimate!

His first purchase was a Varney boxcar kit. It was a wood block to which he glued the embossed tin foil sides and ends, but it did include trucks with wheels that were actually round. Despite the HO boxcar, he stayed with O-scale until up in the 50's. He remembers buying a Hines Lines USRA Mikado kit for $75.00. It was a thing of beauty but had field coils instead of a magnet. Bob put a sequence reverser from an old Lionel locomotive in it so he had some control over the direction it would run. Later he traded it even for a Mantua Mike.

Several years later Bob moved to Houston where he found out about the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. He joined and made his first contact with real, live model railroaders. He was much impressed with the mechanical prowess of the late "Pop" Loefner, the systematic train operations of Ken Caulking, and the artistry and genius of Gil Freitag. He was also a charter member of the Houston Society of Model engineers but by then the demands of his medical practice were such that he could not participate in the building of their fabulous layout in the Union Station. Bob moved to Kerrville and began semi-retirement. He had a house built and drew plans to include a 13 x 27 foot train room where his current layout is located. He was bowled over when PFM came out with their sound system which brought life to his beloved steam locos. He set about making compatible sound units for his local control panels. This lead to his AP Certificate for Electrical Engineer. He acquired a metal lathe to make wheels that were actually concentric. Bob still likes to work with sheet metal (which he now solders and doesn't use oil cans anymore) and he has used it in making his own locomotives, rolling stock and many of his structures, all of which led to Master Builder awards in these categories.

In Bob's own words: "I must admit that I made some gantlet track and a scratch built turnout just for the Civil Engineer award. My scenery depicts those that I have witnessed and enjoyed in my life. I was much honored to have photos of my layout featured on the LSR, Division 6 web page on the internet. And finally, in my dotage, I am thoroughly enjoying my work in the Pass Exchange Program. It just doesn't get much better than this!"

Robert has earned Certificates of Achievement as a Master Builder - Motive Power, Cars, Structures and Scenery, a Model Railroad Engineer - Civil and Electrical, and a Model Railroad Author.